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RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0001  
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 0003  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0003  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0003  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0001  
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0003  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 FEST TWO 000002

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SUBJECT: N'DJAMENA 002: FRENCH AMBASSADOR AND PRESIDENT DEBY WARN  
THAT SUDAN IS REARMING REBELS

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CLASSIFIED BY: LucyTamlyn, Deputy Chief of Mission , U.S.  
Embassy N'Djamena , State Department .  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (S) Summary. The French here believe that they have credible evidence of direct Sudanese involvement in the most recent Chadian rebel attack on N'Djamena. Rebel forces are still in eastern Chad, and reportedly are being rearmed and resupplied by Sudan. The Ambassador presented his credentials to President Deby on February 16 and was informed by the President that he expects a "third attack." End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador met with French Ambassador Bruno Foucher on February 15 to thank him for French assistance in the evacuation of American citizens and American Embassy employees during the fighting in N'Djamena, praising the high level of professionalism and efficacy of the French soldiers. Ambassador Foucher noted that he and his staff had themselves endured some difficult hours (including some horizontal stints on the floor of the Embassy) when the Chadian Army (ANT) and rebel forces clashed in the vicinity of the French Embassy. Foucher felt that the French Embassy had been in no way targeted, but simply lay along the axis of rebel approach (as did the American Embassy).

¶3. (S) Ambassador Foucher informed the Ambassador that they had credible evidence of direct Sudanese involvement in the attack and provided a transcript of a phone conversation (obtained by sigint) between Sudanese Intelligence Head Saleh Gosh and UFDD rebel leader Mahamat Nouri. According to Foucher, the Sudanese seek to overthrow President Deby in order to block EUFOR deployment and to end the "Zaghawa axis" of action between Chad and Sudan. Foucher noted that President Deby had, in fact, been trying to avoid being in debt to the Sudanese Zaghawa rebels. Ironically, Sudan's proxy attack had obliged him to call on them for assistance, thereby further strengthening that bond.

4.(C) Ambassador Foucher himself had no doubts of Sudanese complicity. He acknowledged that the rebels were Chadian, but noted that among the rebel forces captured the Chadians had found sixty Sudanese army uniforms and other evidence of Sudanese involvement. Right now the rebels were in fact still in Chadian territory, being rearmed and resupplied by Sudan. The UFDD was not far from Ade, and the RFC was near Kou Kou. Foucher noted that there appeared to be dissention between the rebel groups, but cautioned that the war was not over. The Chadians had bombed the rebel positions and also intended a land attack using JEM forces. Foucher reported that President Deby had told him that the northern section of N'Djamena was not under Government of Chad control -- the neighborhood had been infiltrated by rebels who were walking about in mufti.

15. (C) Ambassador Foucher noted that the absence of JEM forces in Sudan (presumably having moved over to Chad to assist the President) had left a void. The Government of Sudan had taken advantage of this to resume attacks within Sudan. As a result, new refugees were streaming into Chad. Ten thousand had already crossed, and the number could go as high as 40,000 according to UNHCR. Foucher reported that UNHCR had also told him that the Government was not eager to host the new refugees. (Note: UNHCR Head Serge Male reported the same to the Ambassador on September 14. End note)

16. (C) Ambassador Foucher explained that France was also concerned by the fate of the missing opposition leaders. He had requested and received permission from President Deby to visit former President Lol Choa the previous night in a military prison. According to Foucher, the government claimed that Choa had been picked up in a general sweep that took place near the villa of UFDD leader Mahamat Nouri. Choa had not been recognized and had spent some time in a common prison. He was now in a better location, although still held. The fate of opposition leaders Ibni Oumar and Ngarlejy Yorongar was not known. According to Ambassador Foucher, they could possibly be out of the country or in hiding. He noted that other opposition

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coalition (CPDC) members - former Prime Minister Jean Alingue and opposition leader Salibou Garba - had in fact held a meeting the day before; he did not believe that there was a systematic hunting-down of opposition leaders or suppression of opposition activities. Acknowledging that the Government's excuse of not recognizing former President Choa sounded fishy, Ambassador Foucher noted that he had heard the same explanation from three different sources, and therefore it appeared to have some credibility.

17. (SBU) Ambassador Foucher also informed the Ambassador that prominent human rights activists Delphine Djiraibe Kenneloum and Jacqueline Modeina had been given refuge at the French base. The French informed the President that they intended to take them out of the country. President Deby assented, and Kenneloum and Modeina were given French visas and transported to Libreville by French forces. As for the whereabouts of former Minister of Defense Mahamat Nour, last reported to be in the Libyan Embassy, Ambassador Foucher speculated that he had probably taken advantage of a Libyan flight evacuating Libyan diplomats to leave town (but this was not confirmed).

AMBASSADOR NIGRO PRESENTS CREDENTIALS

18. (SBU) On Saturday, February 16, Ambassador Nigro was called to the Presidential Palace to present his credentials to President Deby (the Belgian Ambassador, resident in Libya, also presented his credentials the same day). Following the ceremony, President Deby (looking alert, but with a hoarse voice) expressed his satisfaction at the continued representation in Chad by "a great country." He welcomed the cooperation extended by the United States in diverse areas, but said that more could be done, particularly given the war against terror, our economic ties and in the face of certain enemies.

We aren't disappointed, he explained, but reiterated that Chad deserved more. President Deby assured the Ambassador support for his mission in Chad, and noted that, although there might be problems and a lack of understanding from time to time, the dialogue between the two countries was "calm and balanced." Turning to the events of last week he stated that Sudan was re-arming the rebels and a third attack was expected on N'djamena. He thanked the United States for having condemned efforts to take power by force of arms and noted that the Security Council had also supported Chad. Foreign Minister Allam-mi would be traveling to New York and Washington in the coming days to argue Chad's case before the UN and with Washington authorities. The President commented that Chad was in a State of Emergency for fifteen days. There had been great damage, the institutions of government had ceased to function, and time was needed to get these back up and running. He assured the Ambassador that this would be done with respect for the Constitution, and for human rights.

¶9. (SBU) Ambassador Nigro thanked the President for the cooperation which Chad had extended. He reassured the President that the U.S. diplomatic presence in Chad had not been interrupted at any time during the hostilities. Some staff were in Cameroon, but the Embassy was functioning. He explained that his mission in Chad represented continuation of U.S. cooperation and friendship between the Chadian and American people, and support for Chad's political, economic and social development. He explained that he would look for ways to continue cooperation, and noted that Ambassador Bechir had requested the visit of a high ranking U.S. Government official for consultations. This visit was being organized and further information would be made available.

¶10. (SBU) Government-run TV and radio reported on the presentation of credentials in news spots throughout the day. The main point highlighted was the Ambassador's statement to the press following presentation in which he stated that the United States was closely following the situation in Chad.

COMMENT

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¶11. (C) The notion that former President Choa could be picked up by mistake and not recognized is not credible, but provides a useful alibi for the Government in the face of widespread national and international concern at the detention of one of Chad's most prominent political leaders and the questions concerning the whereabouts of others.  
THOMPSON